# The Home Miss

By FRANKLIN J

*Professor in the Univers*

PRIVATELY PUB

1890.

# Missionaries.

...LIN JOHNSON,
...University of Chicago.

...LY PUBLISHED.
1890.

With the sincere regards
of the author.

# The Home Missionaries.

By FRANKLIN JOHNSON, 1836-1916

*Professor in the University of Chicago.*

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Bequest
of
Ernest D. Burton

## PREFACE.

The anniversaries of the northern Baptists were appointed to be held at Portland, Oregon, in May, 1896. The financial depression which then prevailed led the managers of our societies to abandon this plan, and the meetings were held in the East, at Asbury Park. Oregon was chosen originally, in order to commemorate the beginning of our denominational work there fifty years before, and especially the opening of the first Baptist church ever dedicated on the Pacific coast. This house was largely the product of the energy of my father, Rev. Hezekiah Johnson, who solicited money and toiled with his hands to build it. The little frame structure still stands at Oregon City, though long since outgrown by the congregation and no longer used for religious purposes.

In 1845 my father and mother went to Oregon under the appointment of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. The journey over the Rocky Mountains and what was then called the Great American

Desert occupied six months. My father continued to labor in Oregon as a minister till the close of his life. He and my mother, according to their request, were buried under the tall fir trees of a farm near Oregon City, and on their tombstone are engraved the words: "Pioneer Baptist Missionaries."

Before it was known that the anniversaries would not be held in Oregon, these verses came to me, commemorating the journey of my parents across the continent and their subsequent labors on the Pacific coast, and I intended to have them read at the meetings of our Home Mission Society. I remember to have heard the incidents of the journey related often at the fireside of my early home, and I have visited several times the scenes among which it lay, so that it is familiar to me. I have sought to present some pictures of the regions west of the Missouri River as they were fifty years ago, as, for example, the well-known mimicries of the Rocky Mountains, the wild sage, the "prickly pear," the snowy fields of alkali, the hot springs, the "jack rabbit," the prairie-dog, in whose burrow were often found the rattle-snake and the owl, the terrific "cloud-burst," the incomparable luster of the moon and stars, and the monotonous level of the plains,

broken sometimes by the so-called "chimney rocks."

In these verses I have supposed myself to be standing in Portland as a reader, with the white cone of Mount Hood in full view and the Willamette Falls but twelve miles distant.

FRANKLIN JOHNSON.

The University of Chicago.

## THE HOME MISSIONARIES.

### I.

All honor to the saintly pioneers,
Who, having wealth of home and friends, left all,
And bore, heroic, to the far frontiers
The life and gladness of the gospel's call.

My father and my mother, such were they;
For a new world to win to Christ they burned;
Success, affection, fortune, bade them stay,
But steadfast hitherward their steps they turned.

Yet others joined them, led by love of change,
Of gain, of danger, or by vague unrest,
Or vagrant longings for the new and strange;
A various muster and a various quest.

Where the plumed cars now race through waving grain,
They plodded patient westward day by day,
Through flood, o'er mountain ramp, o'er fervent plain;
And hope made all their road a shining way.

There are who mourn that time of wild romance,
When there was room, and one could be alone
Beyond the swarming people's swift advance,
And, owning naught, call earth and sky his own.

Yet was the swarming of the people good;
God fashions plain and forest, rock and fen,
But loves not well the empty solitude,
For His delights are with the sons of men.

II.

The mountains towered into eternal frost
Whose gorges they must thread, whose scarps must climb,
An Alpine chaos in confusion tossed
Upon the earth in some far age sublime.

There saw they cunning mimicries in stone,
A buttressed minster tall, a battle-mace,
A fort, a cross, a tent, a royal throne,
Or, clear against the blue, a human face.

And oft the tumbling crags and peaks were kissed
With colors like a dream of paradise,
Rose, ebon, amber, sapphire, amethyst,
Piled tier on tier into the sunlit skies.

More drear than hills and mountains manifold,
And harder manifold for them to brave,
Were the unbounded plains which round them rolled
In flat monotony unbroken save

Where haply from some crumbling mound might spring
A shapely tapered pillar to the skies,
Of storm and rime the perfect chiseling,
Wrought out through slow tempestuous centuries.

III.

There the wild Indians found a fitting home,
A savage region for a savage race,
Where their fierce warrior-hordes at will might roam
And seek unlet the battle or the chase.

And oft the pilgrims met these roving bands,
Who stood in fear of their severe array,
And signed them peace, and mapped upon the sands
The tedious windings of their further way.

And oft they met the mounted trapper rude,
Who, with his squaw in beaded buckskin dressed,
And tawny children, a barbaric brood,
Through lonely weeks across the desert pressed.

## IV.

A curse sat somber on those withered lands
By which accursed plants alone were borne,
Like the gnarled sage, or, sprawling in the sands,
The cactus, barbed with many a cruel thorn;

Except some space of bristling grasses browned
Their tufts courageous in the summer heat,
Or some lone fountain pierced the arid ground
And spread a carpeting for weary feet.

Here were wide fields of deadly alkali,
As white as when the winter snow-storms fell;
There shafts of shining vapors shot on high
From waters seething at the mouth of hell.

The cities of the burrowing dog were there,
Each house deep graven in the earth's hard breast:
In each the rattle-snake might choose his lair;
In each, strange guests! the owl might build her nest.

There had its home the gray gigantic hare
In the dusk shadows of the dusty sage,
And there, in cleft or bush, the grizzly bear,
More terrible than the young lion's rage.

Perchance for days of living things was lack ;
Then straight the whole round world, from marge to marge,
With armies of the buffalo grew black,
And shook with earthquake of their headlong charge.

One fairest form did that wide waste possess,
The antelope, a bounding flower of grace,
Which lured the hunter by its loveliness
And sped like winds and mocked his keenest chase.

## V.

Now fifty years are fled, and all is changed ;
The curse is lifted from that withered land ;
And where wild beasts and wilder warriors ranged
There crescent states with teeming peoples stand.

And one may wander o'er the vast expanse
And search for the old desert-scenes in vain,
And find the town, the church, the school, the manse,
The peaceful herds, the worlds of waving grain.

## VI.

Of fume and fog the air was passing clear ;
To breathe it was to breathe new heart and hope ;
The small loomed large, and distant scenes drew near,
As when one gazes through a telescope.

The sun, untempered, fiercely raged by day,
And through the cordial coolness of the night
The stars blazed huge, with unaccustomed ray,
And the broad moon's mild flame shone doubly bright.

## VII.

Behold the folk astir at early dawn,
The white tents struck, the willing oxen spanned,
The lengthening line of wagons forward drawn,
The herds behind them, a well-guarded band.

Behold them halt beneath the blaze of noon,
The cattle lapping greedy the scant grass,
The hasty meal of friendly groups, then soon
The onward course o'er plain or mountain pass.

Behold them pitch their camp at set of sun
Where some rare spring has made an oasis,
The covered wagons in a circle run,
The fires of surly sage that flame and hiss,

The tents that dot the twilight's deepening shade,
The hungry cattle grazing to their fill
Till barred within the wagons' barricade,
The mounting of the guard; then all is still.

Or haply, not yet charmed by sleep and dreams,
They linger round their fading camp-fires long,
And gladden the last ember's paly beams
With many a jocund story, jest, and song.

Yet oft they passed from heedless mirth to moan
When broke some sudden tempest's dissonance
And laid their tented town in ruins prone
Before the fury of its fierce advance,

Or when an ocean deep of cloud on cloud
Hurled down its drowning billows through the air
And shook the world with crash of thunders loud
And scorched it with the lightning's ceaseless glare.

## VIII.

My parents rested on the day of rest
Even when encompassed close by perils grim,
Assured that He by whom the day was blessed
Would care for them while they should honor Him.

And nightly ere they sought their light repose
They knelt together in undoubting prayer,
And from their sweet consenting voices rose
A hymn of praise upon the desert air.

God's angel led them through those barrens vast
And spake that none should do them any ill;
And, till their creeping caravan had passed,
The warrior-tribes beheld it and were still.

Yet oft, when at the break of day they rose,
They saw, writ plain on ruffled sand or sod,
While they had slept secure their stealthy foes,
Afraid, yet ravenous, had near them trod.

## IX.

They journeyed not as seeking gold or lands;
What others coveted they counted dross,
That they might carry with uncumbered hands
To sinful men the treasure of the cross.

Thus from Missouri's tawny shallows wide
For months they followed the slow oxen's tread,
Then paused where the Willamette's brighter tide
In thunder down its cliffy canyon sped.

Amid a forest high their home they made,
Though near it daily the sleek panther prowled,
The shambling bear his bulk unwieldy swayed,
And the gaunt wolf in sateless hunger howled.

From thence the father, oft afoot, set forth
And spake the gladness of the saving word
To all in west and east, in south and north;
And God His witness bore in them that heard;

And oft the converts to the waters went
Arrayed in meetly-robed procession long:
The forest hushed, the sweet skies nearer bent,
And all things listened to their holy song;

And when they bowed beneath the crystal stream
And rose again from out that mystic tomb,
The heavens shone round them with a brighter gleam
That they had fled the world's approaching doom.

X.

It were a sin against my mother's heart
To paint her features for the world to see;
She was content that, while she served apart,
Her portrait hung in love's small gallery.

My father's form I view before me now,
Nor low, nor large, and for endurance knit,
His great gray head, his square protruding brow
With deepening lines of thought and deed o'erwrit,

His face firm-set with will that moved right on,
Though mountains rose to frown him from his goal,
His eagle-eyes that from deep caverns shone,
Alight with luster of the ardent soul.

He stood above the common faults of men ;
Severe, yet tender in severity ;
True, upright, and self-ruled, a puritan
From puritanic pride and rigor free ;

So towers in lonely majesty Mount Hood,
Attired in ermine of eternal snow,
And from the splendor of its solitude
Pours floods of verdure on the world below.

The mother preached by making home his rest ;
He rallied there for duties yet undone :
God saw the work of each that it was best ;
God saw the work of both that it was one.

## XI.

The Indian found them pitiful and strong
To urge him from his vice and indolence
And shame the shameless whites who did him wrong
And give his helplessness a firm defence.

Yet seemed the yearning of their friendship vain :
So when a tree is wounded to its death
It withers in the spring's caressing rain
And in the summer's warm and vital breath.

But 'twas the winter of that fading race :
A few leaves lingered in the frosty air,
And held as with a dying hand their place
Upon the tribal branches reft and bare.

If now at length it turns again and lives
And feebly decks itself with leaf and flower,
It is with life the gospel ever gives
To him who seeks, though late, its saving power.

## XII.

Hard was their daily toil and scant their wage ;
Yet asked they little, for their wants were few ;
And thus they found a wealthy heritage
In what their willing hands had found to do.

They had no fear; their shepherd was the Lord;
Their daily bread His promises made sure;
With this content, they found it large reward
To till His virgin wilds with minds secure.

Beside the church they set the school on high,
Twin orbs of light, though yet of light diverse;
A sun to flood with luster earth and sky,
A moon a fainter radiance to disperse.

They knew full well the worth of that they wrought;
They saw afar with clear prophetic eyes
The fair republics full with blessings fraught,
That soon beneath the westering sun should rise.

## XIII.

At length on the Willamette's greening shore
Their fight they finished and were crowned with life,
Near where yon hoary falls with solemn roar
Sing anthems for their triumph in the strife.

They had their wish; for them let no one weep;
They chose to toil for man unknown to men
Where now our stately temples heavenward sweep
From the deep bases they cemented then.

They had their wish; for them we shed no tear;
Within the forest-aisles they loved they lie,
Where the tall firs their mighty columns rear
And pillar up the arches of the sky.

They had their wish; for them let no one mourn;
From happy life through happy death they sped;
To paradise by angels they were borne;
And they are now forever comforted.

## XIV.

If here we meet within a mighty state,
If here the family is whole and pure,
If here the man is strong to conquer fate,
If here the woman's honor is secure,

If senates are unbought and courts are just
To scourge the wrong and set its victims free,
If public office is a public trust,
If rich and poor strike hands in amity,

If school and college wax from more to more
And show us to assuage our human ills,
If from the mountains to the ocean's shore
The churches light our forests, vales, and hills,

It is to these and such as these we owe
The gracious fruits of faith and hope and love,
Who scorned the gain men covet here below
And sought the gain reserved for them above.

## XV.

We thank Thee, God, Thou fount of godliness,
For all Thou wroughtest through these righteous dead
We bless Thy name when we Thy servants bless,
And follow Thee when in their steps we tread.

Our country now is one vast garden-land,
With no frontiers of mountain, plain, or wood,
Yet countless thousands of its people stand
In outer darkness, far from any good.

What arid plains of earthly pleasures vain,
What frigid mountains of self-will and pride,
What forest-depths of sin and vice and pain,
Thy church and these unhappy souls divide.

Help us these distances to overpass
Upon the urgent feet of love divine
That haste to every clime and every class,
And let our country and the world be Thine.